

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Claims 1-6 (canceled).

7. (currently amended) A storage controller for controlling transfer of input/output data to and from a lower level apparatus in response to input/output requests received from a higher level apparatus, said storage controller comprising:

- a plurality of external interface controllers for receiving said input/output requests;
- a plurality of control processors which process said input/output requests;
- a loop of fibre channel interface interposed between said external interface controllers ~~on one hand~~ and said control processors ~~on the other hand~~ so as to serve as a channel through which information is transferred therebetween; and
- storing means which is accessed in common by said control processors and which stores a logical unit number which the input/output requests are assigned to, and to be processed by said control processors,

wherein each of said control processors comprises:

- monitoring means for monitoring operating status of the other control processors, and
- takeover means which, if a stopped state of any other control processor is detected, updates said logical unit numbers in said storing means so that the control processor in question may take over the processing of the stopped control processor.

Claims 8-10 (canceled).

11. (previously added) A storage controller according to claim 7, wherein said storing means includes a time information area for allowing said plurality of control processors to write current time information therein,

wherein each of said plurality of control processors further comprises:

means for writing the current time information at predetermined intervals, and

wherein said monitoring means allows each control processor to check said current time information written by other control processors to detect whether any of said control processors has stopped or not.

12. (previously added) A storage controller according to claim 7, wherein external interfaces, which are used for communication between said external interface controllers and said higher level apparatus, has a plurality of different types, and

wherein each of said external interface controller converts said input/output request in an information format of said external interface received from said higher level apparatus into an input/output request in another format used for said loop of fibre channel interface.

13. (previously added) A storage controller according to claim 12, wherein said external interface includes a fibre channel interface, and

wherein said external interface controller transmits the input/output request received from said higher level apparatus to said loop of fibre channel interface.

14. (previously added) A storage controller according to claim 12, wherein said external interface includes a SCSI, and

wherein said external interface controller converts said input/output request in a SCSI format into a request in an information format used for said loop of fibre channel interface.

15. (previously added) A storage controller according to claim 12, wherein said external interface includes a channel interface for the use by a main frame system, and

wherein said external interface controller converts said input/output request in the channel interface format into a request in an information format used for said loop of fibre channel interface.

Claims 16-20 (canceled).

21. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 7, wherein said storage controller further comprises:

a data storage memory which is connected to said control processors for temporarily storing the data stored in said lower level apparatus, and

wherein each of said control processors further comprises:

transmitting means for sending information to said loop,

wherein when said input/output request is a read request, said control processor reads requested data from said data storage memory and sends out the requested data to said loop through said transmitting means.

22. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 21, wherein when said input/output request is a write request, said control processor writes data to said data storage memory.

23. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 21, wherein external interfaces, which are used for communication between said external interface controllers and said higher level apparatus, has a plurality of types, and wherein said external interface controller converts said input/output request in an information format of said external interface received from said higher level apparatus into the input/output request in another format used for said loop of fibre channel interface.

24. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 23, wherein said external interface includes a fibre channel interface, and wherein said external interface controller transmits the input/output request received from said higher level apparatus to said loop of fibre channel interface.

25. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 23, wherein said external interface includes a SCSI, and wherein said external interface controller converts said input/output request in the SCSI format into the request in an information format used for said loop of fibre channel interface.

26. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 23, wherein said external interface includes a channel interface for the use of main frame system, and

wherein said external interface controller converts said input/output request in the channel interface format into the request in an information format used for said loop of fibre channel interface.

27. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 7, wherein said storage controller further comprises:

a data storage memory, which is connected to said control processor, for temporarily storing the data stored in said lower level apparatus,

wherein when said input/output request is a write request, a processing means for processing said input/output request in said control processor writes data to said data storage memory.

28. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 27, wherein each of said control processors further comprises:

transmitting means for sending information to said loop,

wherein when said input/output request is a read request, said control processor reads requested data from said data storage memory and sends out the requested data to said loop through said transmitting means.

29. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 27, wherein external interfaces, which are used for communication between said external interface controllers and said higher level apparatus, has a plurality of types, and wherein said external interface controller converts said input/output request in an information format of said external interface received from said higher level apparatus into the input/output request in another format used for said loop of fibre channel interface.

30. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 29, wherein said external interface includes a fibre channel interface, and wherein said external interface controller transmits the input/output request received from said higher level apparatus to said loop of fibre channel interface.

31. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 29, wherein said external interface includes a SCSI, and wherein said external interface controller converts said input/output request in the SCSI format into the request in an information format used for said loop of fibre channel interface.

32. (previously added): A storage controller according to claim 29, wherein said external interface includes a channel interface for the use of main frame system, and

wherein said external interface controller converts said input/output request in the channel interface format into the request in an information format used for said loop of fibre channel interface.